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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 USNATO 000578

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SUBJECT: NATO/HLTF MEETING, OCTOBER 19 2007 - THE WAY AHEAD

REF: (A) STATE 145653 (GUIDANCE)

Classified By: U.S. HLTF Representative DAS Karin L. Look for reasons 1
.4 (b and d).

11. (C) Summary. The October 19 High Level Task Force meeting focused on discussion of the "way ahead" for maintaining the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE) in the face of Russia's stated intent to suspend implementation. HLTF representative Karin L. Look provided Allies with a readout of the October 10-13, 2007 Moscow discussions on CFE, making clear there was an active bilateral process ongoing between the U.S. and Russia. Rep Look reiterated that it was critical for Russia to take steps to fulfill its commitments, although the U.S. was seeking to develop creative ways to resolve the current impasse. She noted the U.S. remained committed to the CFE and Adapted CFE Treaties, and was concerned that Russia had already decided to suspend Treaty implementation on December 12 unless a creative solution could be put forward on the Treaty and Russia's remaining Istanbul commitments. There was a groundswell of support from Allies at the HLTF for the U.S. CFE package approach delivered in Moscow. Allies also praised the U.S. for its transparency in providing them with Look's talking points on the Moscow talks as well as further details of the package. Allies backed the U.S. request for the NATO International Staff (IS) to begin worst case contingency planning should Russia suspend implementation on December 12. France called for a CFE Seminar in Paris to be held on 5-6 November, for which invitations have been sent, as a means to keep the dialogue moving among all Treaty States Parties. U.S. Rep Look noted that the Paris meeting might be ill-timed, given the need to allow the U.S.-Russia bilateral process time to gain momentum. Allies agreed to a German proposal to discuss CFE at the October 31 NATO-Russia Council (NRC) Ambassadorial. The International Military Staff was tasked to work with the Baltic Allies concerning force levels required for accession, while the HLTF Deputies will continue to discuss the IS-drafted accession food for thought paper. The next HLTF meeting is most likely to be held on November 15. End Summary.

HLTF: Contacts and Bilaterals

12. (SBU) Germany (German Head of Delegation Leudeking) provided a brief read out of the October 1-2 Bad Saarow CFE seminar, noting that Russia had been put on the defensive by Allied unity on the parallel actions approach. The key open issues, according to Leudeking, remain the flank regime

("most likely purely political for Russia") and the linkage of A/CFE ratification to the Istanbul commitments. Germany called for using a constructive approach to move forward including events such as the French-proposed CFE seminar to demonstrate that Allies would leave no stone unturned in the search for a resolution. This was particularly critical, Leudeking emphasized, as a Russian suspension might lead to an erosion of the CFE regime that cannot be stopped once begun. The Germans provided HLTF delegations with a food-for-thought paper on the "Potential consequences of a collapse of the CFE Regime."

¶3. (SBU) Two plus Two read out and specific ideas: U.S. Head of Delegation Karin L. Look briefed Allies on the October 10-13 two plus two CFE meetings in Moscow, including discussions with Russian President Putin, between the ministers, and among experts. She noted the U.S. had reiterated its commitment to CFE, the Adapted CFE Treaty, and concern that Russia's announcement to suspend implementation of the CFE Treaty on December 12 would ultimately undermine a cornerstone of security in Europe. Russia had responded positively to the U.S. parallel actions plan, but added that it insufficiently addressed Russia's substantive concerns. Russia stated emphatically that it did not accept NATO's linkage between A/CFE ratification and the Istanbul commitments, arguing there was no need for Russia to take further steps regarding those commitments in the CFE context.

¶4. (SBU) Look said that in response to the Russian initial position, the U.S. had suggested possible elements of a package, building on our parallel actions plan, for progress on CFE and related issues. There was a groundswell of

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support for the U.S. CFE package approach. A number of Allies (Germany, Turkey, UK, Norway, Italy, Greece, Romania, France, Denmark, and Poland) spoke in favor of it, none expressed any major objection, and a few offered some additional ideas. Rep Look provided Allies with cleared talking points on the basics of the U.S. ideas (for getting Russia to move forward on its Istanbul commitments and to rescind its suspension decree presented to the Russians at the two plus two CFE talks in Moscow). Allies praised the U.S. transparency in describing the two plus two talks and package deal. Rep Look said that based on the U.S. offer it appears that Russia might be prepared to take limited additional steps on its Istanbul commitments regarding Georgia and Moldova, and to reconsider its plan to suspend CFE implementation in December, in the context of steps by NATO toward ratification of A/CFE and engagement on Russia's security concerns. She reported the U.S. will be following up soon at the A/S Fried-DFM Kislyak level to clarify Russian thinking.

¶5. (C) Allies (particularly Norway, Turkey and Greece) expressed appreciation for the U.S. firm stand on the flanks issue in talks with Russia, and generally agreed that we cannot offer more than a political commitment to review the operation of A/CFE once it has entered into force and such a review would cover all aspects of A/CFE and not just the flanks specifically. Germany concurred with the U.S. assessment that the flanks might be the ultimate deal breaker, but suggested there was more room for creativity, including a commitment to exercise restraint. Germany, however, acknowledged that Russia's flank arguments could stem purely from domestic political concerns, which could mean that nothing less than an agreement to abolish the flank limits for Russia would be persuasive.

¶6. (C) Romania Head of Delegation (Micula) proposed several ideas be incorporated into the U.S. package approach, including a trigger date for ratification, better balance between the Allied ratification tranches, a defined mechanism for monitoring fulfillment of Russian obligations, and a method to formalize the agreement. The need to achieve a

firm, possibly formal, agreement to document Russian agreement with the package resonated with several others, especially as it would assist with ratification procedures. Although Spain said it was willing to accept a hand shake, others that spoke strongly advocated a formal process, with Luxembourg reminding Reps that the suspension was not simply an informal undertaking, but rather a presidential decree.

¶17. (C) Romania's trigger date idea (establishing a NATO plan for a D-day plus 1 response if/when Russia rescinds suspension) included a suggestion for developing windows for when groups of Allies would begin publicly visible ratification procedures. The D-day timeline would be front-loaded with those who have lengthier processes. Allies would make clear to Russia that no country would start to ratify before Russia agrees to rescind its suspension notification, and Allies would avoid setting tentative deadlines for the end of the ratification process (since the time to complete ratification is unpredictable). According to the Romanian suggestion, no Ally would actually transmit its instrument of ratification until all were ready and agreed to do so. Allies discussed the Romania D-Day concept and how it might work with or substitute for the ratification matrix. Germany and France suggested the Allied ratification matrix tranche groupings may have been overtaken by events and no longer relevant. (Comment: The Romanian idea might work within the context of our previously developed ratification matrix, but would be less dependent on end dates. End Comment.)

¶18. (C) Greece introduced what it described as a fallback position, based on the concept of "unilateral parallelism," that could be used in the event negotiations were bogged down in the details of timelines and procedures. Under this proposal, States Parties would initiate their ratification procedures as desired, but delay the deposit of ratification instruments as the "trump card". Greece stated that using a specific timetable for starting ratification procedures could lead to procrastination and delay. Moreover, starting ratification procedures now would serve as a public sign to Moscow that Allies are serious about entry into force of A/CFE. Italy, Spain and Netherlands noted that we should be willing to explore new ideas to speed the process along, and Luxembourg stated it was willing to live with the Greek

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proposal.

¶19. (C) Canada responded that the Greek proposal would "lead us down a dangerous course" since it did not require Russia to do anything first. U.S. Rep Look agreed, saying that the U.S., as well as many others, needed a commitment from Russia on elements of a package that maintained parallelism and included a Russian agreement to rescind suspension. Presenting A/CFE to the U.S. Senate otherwise was not a viable option. Look also cautioned the Greek proposal could end up with some countries isolated, especially those that could not stop ratification once put in motion. The UK rep echoed these concerns, adding that the UK had largely already done what Greece suggested and the Russian attitude had hardened instead of improved.

¶10. (C) Several Allies (the UK, Romania, Germany, and Canada) supported the U.S. position that we cannot begin ratification until Russia agrees to the package deal. A few Allies, however, stated that they would be willing to begin internal, non-visible, administrative ratification procedures now so as to be ready when/if Russia rescinds suspension. France, Greece and Spain indicated they had already done so. The UK noted the parallel actions concept seemed to have gained forward momentum and called for Allies to be patient and to allow the necessary time and space for the "deal" to come to fruition. Delegations should consider ways to help the process rather than ways that could risk stalling it, such as support of alternative measures.

¶11. (C) Most Allies stated that the Russian proposal of provisional application of A/CFE was not possible, although Germany argued for considering a partial provisional application of some elements of the adapted Treaty, such as the limits on holdings). (In the HLTF Quad, the French and Germans pressed for "testing" certain elements of A/CFE, like new inspection regimes, as a confidence building measure.)

The Way Ahead - Agreed NATO Priorities

¶12. (C) Allies agreed to the U.S. request for the NATO International Staff to begin worst case contingency planning in the event Russia suspends CFE implementation on December 12. Allies should start considering what they would do on December 13 and in the weeks that follow, and also what we should say the week before at the NATO ministerial. All agreed that NATO needed to be ready to make a public statement (as we did in July after the Russian announcement of intended suspension) and to consider issues such as continuation of inspections, data exchanges, and Russian participation in the JCG

French Seminar

¶13. (C) France introduced its November 5-6 CFE seminar in Paris, for which invitations have been sent, as an urgent need to keep the dialogue moving and as another opportunity engage Russia on what is and what is not possible. France also said that the November 5-6 date had been chosen to fall between the Bad Saarow seminar and the upcoming NATO and OSCE Foreign Ministerial meetings in late November and early December. France noted that the seminar would be conducted using a different format than Bad Saarow, including more time for informal consultations. U.S. Rep Look said we would not object to the proposed Nov. 5-6 dates (for now), but noted that the meeting might be ill-timed, given the need to allow the U.S.-Russia bilateral process time to gain momentum. Nevertheless, many Allies supported the seminar not only as another opportunity to discuss CFE issues, but also as a key element of a public diplomacy effort (pushed by France and Germany) that would demonstrate Allies were actively engaged in an effort to maintain the CFE regime. (COMMENT. As the French seminar takes shape, it would be useful for the U.S. to provide input on the format and substance as soon as possible to maintain momentum and support the on-going U.S.-Russia bilateral process. END COMMENT).

Other Issues

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¶14. (SBU) Preparation for the NRC Ambassadorial: Allies agreed to the German proposal to discuss CFE at the October 31 NRC Ambassadorial, but agreed to keep dialogue at a general level with appropriate pre-coordination of a unified message to present to Russia. The goal for the meeting would be to express unity behind the package deal.

¶15. (SBU) Accession Paper: The HLTF agreed on the need to move beyond the IS food for thought paper on accession to a military analysis of A/CFE limits that could be appropriate for the Baltic States and Slovenia, taking into account relevant current NATO defense planning. The International Military Staff was tasked to work with the Baltic States and Slovenia while the HLTF Deputies continue discussion of the accession food for thought paper. NATO solidarity, all agreed, would be key as the process moved forward.

Meetings on the Margins

¶16. (C) Quad Meeting (U.S., UK, France, Germany): At the German-hosted Quad the day prior to the HLTF, discussion centered on the way forward. Germany made a strong pitch for Allies to do everything possible to save the CFE Treaty. Germany expressed interest in ensuring Allies avoided blame for a possible Russian suspension. Look briefed on the discussions held in Moscow at the two plus two and related meetings between A/S Fried and DFM Kislyak on October 10-12. Other issues briefed were the flank regime discussions (ceilings, sub-ceilings, and elimination of), ratification of A/CFE and Russia's desire for provisional application, accession of the Baltics/Slovenia, possible definition of substantial combat forces, Russia's Istanbul commitments regarding Georgia and Moldova, Russian comments on the parallel actions approach, and the need for a Russian commitment not to suspend Treaty implementation. The Quad agreed with the U.S.'s call for a solution with "meat". France questioned whether anything would satisfy Putin, who appeared to find A/CFE limits on Russia unacceptable. Germany outlined four issues which would need resolution: continuance of the CFE and A/CFE Treaties; military restraints in the flank; defining substantial combat forces; and early participation by the Baltic Allies and Slovenia. The French noted they had sent out invitations for their Paris November 5-6 Seminar on CFE. The U.S. stated a preference for postponing the French seminar, noting that it could distract from the now moving U.S.-Russia bilats, and stressing that a meeting later in November might be used, if all went well, to announce agreement on the parallel package approach with Russia. The UK suggested Allies should not expend its attention on the Vienna FSC special meeting and Russia's CSBM proposals there, as the Russians continued to undermine the biggest CSBM in Europe (i.e., the CFE regime). France noted that a 4 1 in Vienna prior to the FSI Special meeting would provide political cover). In a very brief discussion of the Allies' Ratification Matrix, the Quad discussed whether we needed three or two tranches, and whether the plan should include a specific sequencing timeline. The Quad also agreed to press HLTF Deputies to consider options for an Allied response should Russia carry out its threat to suspend the Treaty December 12. Germany cautioned that Allies must consider all options before any references to non-compliance or a declaration of material breach

¶17. (C) Look and team held bilateral meetings with Allies primarily to preview the U.S. discussions in Moscow and to discuss other country specific issues:

-- Romania, Oct 18: DAS Look briefed Romanian HLTF rep Micula on the two plus two CFE meetings in Moscow. Micula indicated he had received a back brief from EUR/RPM Deputy Director Jennifer Laurendeau, read out in Bucharest earlier that day. With regard to the peacekeeping force in Moldova, Micula understood the package deal included an OSCE mandate and a slow transformation beginning with just a few civilians. Micula reviewed for Look several suggestions for incorporation into the U.S. package approach (which he presented to the HLTF on October 19). Of note, he emphasized the need to formalize Russian agreement to rescind suspension. To move to its parliamentary ratification process, Romania will need certainty on the "deal" and clear confirmation from Moldova to demonstrate that conditionality (host nation consent) has been maintained.

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-- Turkey, Oct 19: DAS Look discussed with Turkey HLTF rep Gun the U.S. talking points describing the Moscow two plus two talks and U.S. package deal on CFE. The discussion also covered the Russian flank regime proposal, the Allied matrix on ratification timing, Romania's suggestion of a D-day plus 1 concept as a means to signify the start of the parallel package approach, possible legal actions in response to

suspension, and the proposed French Seminar. Turkey stated it was satisfied with U.S. actions at the two plus two and Fried/Kislyak meetings. Turkey agreed that we had common ground among Allies to agree to discuss the operation of the flank limits after entry into force of A/CFE, but could make no commitment on its outcome. Turkey, like the U.S., wanted Russia to announce it would rescind its earlier announcement to suspend implementation of the Treaty. Look emphasized the need for a NATO response plan if Russia suspends December 12.

Turkey agreed, suggesting a "cooling-off" period before any actions were taken Turkey also cautioned against getting distracted by legalities, when the most important questions are political matters. Concerning the proposed French seminar, Turkey had no objections.

Next HLTF Meeting

¶18. (SBU) The HLTF discussed dates for an HLTF meeting in November. The HLTF proposed November 15 for its next meeting, agreeing with the U.S. that a meeting the week of November 5 would be too early and also agreed not to hold it during the week of Thanksgiving. The NATO IS has, therefore, tentatively scheduled the next HLTF for November 15.
OLSON